

## Additional Information

### Tips For Observing and Photographing Dragonflies

Dragonflies can be loosely lumped into categories of “perchers” or “flyers”. Perchers, such as some of the skimmers, have a usual or favorite perch which they return to repeatedly. Some flyers have a usual route, a beat which they fly back and forth in the same area. You can pre-focus your camera or binoculars on that area to get a close look. Some have a large, long beat and are more difficult to predict, so some luck and persistence are required to find them perched. Most odonates are most active in the middle of the day, but some are more active early and late, roosting most of the day in the shade. Be prepared, research and study your subjects first to know the preferred habitats. Binoculars, especially close-focus binoculars are a great aid for observing all nature subjects.

Approach slowly, getting closer and snapping away as you go (with today’s digital cameras, you can always delete later), a good distant shot is better than none and will be of some aid in identifying later.

Try to align planes of focus; for example, a side view is usually good, so move to the side for a clear side view of the dragonfly. A “3/4 view” can show face and eyes as well as the side. Some field marks are more important than others in differentiating one species from another. Get more than one angle if possible.

Sun at your back is always good for photographic detail but be ready to use flash to “fill” in the detail on the shadow side if the subject is back-lit or in any dark situation.

### About ATBI

This brochure was compiled and developed by the All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory (ATBI) group. ATBI is an on-going project in Tennessee State Parks and State Natural Areas. The goal of ATBI is to document all species in Tennessee State Parks, monitor long-term trends in specific taxonomic groups, and promote education about and preservation of all biodiversity with increased science and citizen education efforts. To access the ATBI database, go to [www.tn.gov/environment/parks/atbi](http://www.tn.gov/environment/parks/atbi).

For more information about ATBI, please contact David Hill, 7th Floor, L & C Tower, 401 Church St., Nashville, TN 37243. Email [david.r.hill@tn.gov](mailto:david.r.hill@tn.gov). Phone 615-253-2455.

#### Dragonfly References

Beaton, Giff. 2007. Dragonflies and Damselflies of Georgia and the Southeast. A Wormsloe Foundation Nature Book.

Dunkle, Sidney. 2000. Dragonflies through Binoculars: A Field Guide to Dragonflies of North America. Oxford University Press.

Nikula, Blair et al. 2002. Stokes Beginner’s Guide to Dragonflies. Little, Brown & Company.

<http://www.odonatacentral.org/>. Dragonfly Society of the Americas. This site has checklists of dragonflies by county.

*Collecting of plants or animals in state parks and natural areas is prohibited. Please help preserve Tennessee’s natural heritage by leaving plants and animals for others to enjoy.*

#### DUNBAR CAVE STATE NATURAL AREA

401 Old Dunbar Cave Rd  
Clarksville, TN 37043-5725

Phone: (931) 648-5526

[www.tn.gov/environment/parks/DunbarCave/](http://www.tn.gov/environment/parks/DunbarCave/)

TENNESSEE STATE PARKS  
DIVISION OF RESOURCE  
MANAGEMENT



*All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory (ATBI)*

## Dragonflies and Damselflies of Dunbar Cave State Natural Area and Montgomery County



Photo © Richard Connors

Welcome to the wonderful world of dragonflies at beautiful Dunbar Cave State Natural Area! Of the approximate 155 species of odonates (dragonflies and damselflies) in Tennessee, 28 have been documented in this park or Montgomery County.

Above is a picture of a Widow Skimmer (*Libellula luctuosa*), male. A common “percher”, widow skimmers are found near lakes, ponds and slow sections of streams. Both males and females have the solid black wing stripes next to the body. You can remember this one by: “the Widow wears black next to the body”. The female has a dark brown abdomen with a bright yellow stripe down the sides.

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# Dragonfly and Damselfly Checklist of Dunbar Cave State Natural Area and Montgomery County

**Damselflies (Zygoptera)**

**Broad-winged Damselflies**  
**(Calopterygidae)**

- ☐ Ebony Jewelwing
- ☐ Smoky Rubyspot

**Pond Damselflies (Coenagrionidae)**

- ☐ Blue-fronted Dancer
- ☐ Variable Dancer
- ☐ Powdered Dancer
- ☐ Blue-tipped Dancer
- ☐ Dusky Dancer
- ☐ Familiar Bluet
- ☐ Stream Bluet
- ☐ Skimming Bluet
- ☐ Orange Bluet
- ☐ Slender Bluet
- ☐ Fragile Forktail
- ☐ Rambur’s Forktail
- ☐ Eastern Forktail

**Dragonflies (Anisoptera)**

**Dragonflies Darners (Aeshnidae)**

- ☐ Shadow Darner
- ☐ Common Green Darner

**Emeralds (Corduliidae)**

- ☐ Prince Baskettail

**Skimmers (Libellulidae)**

- ☐ Halloween Pennant
- ☐ Eastern Pondhawk
- ☐ Slaty Skimmer

- ☐ Widow Skimmer
- ☐ Great Blue Skimmer
- ☐ Blue Dasher
- ☐ Eastern Amberwing
- ☐ Common Whitetail
- ☐ Blue-faced Meadowhawk
- ☐ Carolina Saddlebags
- ☐ Black Saddlebags

**Habitat/History**

Dunbar Cave State Natural Area is a 110-acre area in Montgomery County. Its significant feature is a well-explored scenic and historic cave, which above ground is surrounded by an upland hardwood forest. A stream exits the cave and has been impounded to form a small lake that is inhabited by many fish, turtles, and other wildlife. The cave is the habitat for several rare animals including the federally endangered gray bat (*Myotis grisescens*) and the southern cavefish (*Typhlichthys subterraneus*). Cave salamanders, crickets and other animals as well as fungi and bacteria live near the front of the cave in the area known as the twilight zone.

Dunbar is one of the most prominent caves in an area where caves and sinkholes are common. This eight mile long cave has historical, natural, archaeological, and geological significance. Dunbar Cave formed as the Red River cut through the Mississippian age limestone and lowered the local water table about two or three million years ago. This enabled the flow of water through small cracks and solution joints from the sinkhole plain above it to the Red River drainage. The slightly acidic water dissolved the limestone along its route over

millions of years creating the cave. Although the most visited parts of the cave are well known, there are still virgin passages discovered on occasion as spelunkers push into the more remote sections of the cave.

Humans have been attracted to Dunbar Cave for thousands of years with its constant stream flow and natural air conditioning. There have been recent excavations near the entrance that reveal it to be an important archeological site. One projectile point found at Dunbar Cave dates back as much as 10,000 years to the Paleo-Indian culture. In more recent times the cave was used as an important community center and even as a country music band shell when it was owned by Roy Acuff.

**Good spots**

\*Over the lake and in open areas, look for patrolling dragonflies

\*All along the shore of Swan Lake in vegetation (for damselflies) and on prominent twigs for “percher” dragonflies

\*Along woodland trail in sunny spots, look for perchers, especially in the spring

**Notes**

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